

**Memorandum of Understanding  
Between  
U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development,  
American Association of Community Colleges  
And  
Rural Community College Alliance**

**I. Parties, Purpose of Agreement, and Background**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Rural Development (RD), American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Rural Community College Alliance (RCCA), have well established programs that serve rural communities. USDA/RD, RCCA and AACC have a strong history of collaborating to help meet the educational needs of rural communities, and today's economic realities make this cooperation vital to providing improved education, capacity building and technical assistance to rural communities.

To help meet the educational needs of rural America, USDA/RD, AACC and RCCA will partner to leverage their resources to increase the availability of capital for educational facilities and to provide technical assistance, with the goal of improving the accessibility and quality of education in rural communities.

The RCCA, a non-profit organization traces its roots to the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), a national demonstration program at 24 community and tribal colleges initiated by the Ford Foundation in 1994 and managed by MDC Inc. The RCCA builds on that experience, helping more colleges partner with their communities to improve education and work for economic prosperity.

The AACC is a non-profit organization that represents almost 1,200 two-year, associate degree-granting institutions and more than 11 million students. Founded in 1920, the AACC is governed by a 32-member board of directors elected by the membership. The Association is organized and operated exclusively for charitable and educational purposes in support of the nation's community colleges.

The USDA Rural Development (RD) was created under the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994. Under that Act, Rural Development is charged to administer the former Farmers Home Administration non-farm financial programs including former Rural Electrification Administration (REA) programs. Today, RD consists of three agencies Rural Housing Service, and Rural Business - Cooperative Service, and Rural Utilities Service and a network of offices across the nation to administer programs. The mission of USDA Rural Development is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality for people in rural America. RD provides financial support for the development of essential community facilities and services such as water and sewer systems, housing, health clinics, emergency service facilities, and electric and telephone services. RD promotes economic development by providing loan guarantees to businesses through private sector financial institutions. In addition, RD provides grants and loan guarantees to farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses to develop renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements.

**II. Areas of Collaborative Efforts and Objectives**

The main objective of this MOU is to facilitate increased cooperation between the USDA RD and the rural community colleges, to leverage their partnerships and work more effectively together, with the goal to reach more and teach more, thereby improving efforts to strengthen the rural economy.

USDA RD, AACC, and RCCA agree to pursue collaborative efforts in the following areas in order to achieve the above stated purpose:

Establish working groups for improving the leveraging of RD financial and technical, and capacity building assisting with private sources of assistance to better help rural educational institutions;

Coordinate with local USDA/RD, AACC, and RCCA personnel and member institutions to develop models for outreach and technical assistance for rural educational institutions;

Leveraging each organization's respective partnership base by exploring the possibility of co-sponsored events such as conferences, seminars, webinars and other networking events.

Facilitate interactive panel discussions regarding rural education challenges and opportunities at local and regional level meetings;

Participate in public and private events to discover and address potential barriers to resources or services;

Monitor, measure and evaluate the value and cost effectiveness of policies and programs;

Provide leadership and direction on nationwide messaging, materials, and best practices; and

Continuously develop additional opportunities for providing national level support for collaborations in areas of mutual interest related to economic development, innovation, and regional collaboration.

### *III. Roles and Responsibilities*

#### AACC and RCCA

AACC and RCCA will work with their member institutions to encourage interactions with USDA/RD State Office counterparts to facilitate outreach efforts. The focus will primarily be on the potential for Rural Development to support rural educational institutions through its Community Facilities programs.

#### USDA Rural Development

Rural Development State Directors will work with their RCCA and AACC counterparts regarding outreach and technical assistance for rural educational institutions to develop applications for loan and grant funding for new construction, improvements and the purchase of equipment to support education in rural communities.

Participation by USDA in this Agreement does not result in a commitment of funds. USDA's participation in this Agreement is subject to USDA having sufficient program funds available.

#### AACC, RCCA and USDA Agencies

USDA RD and RCCA, and AACC will commit representatives to a Rural Education Group that will coordinate this effort nationally. Signatories will assign appropriate senior-level representatives from the various relevant program areas to the Working Group. Working collaboratively, USDA/RD AACC and RCCA will focus efforts on the following activities:

Assessing innovative development practices for improving rural education; and

Promoting partnerships between stakeholders to promote best practices and address programmatic and policy challenges.

### **IV. Definitions and Web Addresses**

Information about the American Association of Community Colleges is located at:  
<http://www.aacc.nche.edu>

Key point of contact for American Association of Community Colleges is located at:  
[jmckenney@aacc.nche.edu](mailto:jmckenney@aacc.nche.edu)

A list of Rural Community College Alliance member institutions is located at:  
<http://www.mdcinc.org/rcci/partners.htm>

Information about the Rural Community College Alliance is located at: <http://www.ruralccalliance.org>

Key points of contact for the Rural Community College Alliance is located at: [Randy.Smith@ruralccalliance.org](mailto:Randy.Smith@ruralccalliance.org)

Information about Rural Development is located at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/Home.html>

State Rural Development Offices are located at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/StateOfficeAddresses.html>

## **V. Effective Date**

The effective date of the agreement is the date of the latest signature of this Agreement.

## **VI. General Terms and Conditions**

### **A. Review**

The parties agree to review jointly the terms and conditions at least annually if the period of this project exceeds one year. Appropriate changes will be made by modification/amendment to the original agreement. The parties further agree to review performance under this Agreement to determine if expectations are being met and document a summary of their assessment. The responsible reviewing official at each agency shall sign and date the assessment.

### **B. Review**

Any modification/amendment to the terms and conditions shall be made in writing and signed by all agencies.

### **C. Modifications/ Amendments**

This Agreement may be terminated upon 60 calendar days written notice by any party. If this Agreement is terminated, the agencies shall agree to the terms of the termination.

### **D. Termination of Agreement**

The period of performance will be from the effective date of the agreement through December 31, 2015.

### **E. Resolving Disagreements**

Disputes shall be resolved pursuant to applicable provisions of the Business Rules for Intra-Governmental Transactions delineated in the Treasury Financial Manual, Vol. 1, Bulletin 2007-03, Section VII (Resolving Intra-Governmental Disputes and Major Differences).

## **Approvals and Contact Information**

### **Point of Contact**

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#### **American Association of Community**

##### **Colleges**

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#### **American Association of Community**

##### **Colleges**

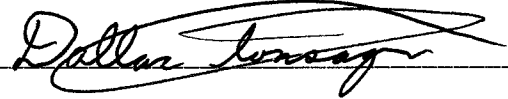
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USDA Rural Development

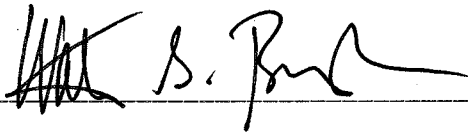
AGENCY OFFICIAL:

Signature:  Date: 3/2/12

Name: Dallas Tonsager  
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Agency: USDA/Rural Development  
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American Association of Community Colleges

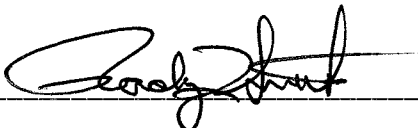
ORGANIZATION OFFICIAL

Signature:  Date: 3/2/2012

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Rural Community College Alliance

ORGANIZATION OFFICIAL:

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